

For years, I've worked with Josh Vandiver of Central New Jersey to help him fight deportation actions against his husband, Henry Velandia, a native Venezuelan. My belief has always been that Josh and Henry deserve the same benefits and protections afforded to other committed couples under U.S. immigration law.

Last June, Josh and Henry [celebrated the news](#) that the Department of Homeland Security had canceled deportation actions – but that decision applied only to their specific case, raising the possibility that other same-sex families like theirs might still be torn apart.

I recently joined 83 other members of Congress in urging federal officials to announce a formal policy that all American families, regardless of their sexual orientation, will be treated equally by our immigration system.

Over the weekend, we received good news. The Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, replied to say that she has directed immigration officials “to disseminate written guidance to the field that the interpretation of the phrase ‘family relationships’ includes long-term, same-sex partners.”

This is a major step forward, but because it is only a statement of administration policy, it could be reversed by a future president or disregarded in a specific case. I will continue to push for Congressional action, including the repeal of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act, to ensure that no couple ever again faces the fear and confusion that Josh and Henry lived with for so long.

October 16 is Your Last Chance to Register to Vote in November

October 16 is the last day that New Jersey residents can register to vote in this year's federal, state, county, and local elections. Registration forms and information about how to register [can be found online](#)

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I also want to remind you that in New Jersey, any voter can [request a vote-by-mail ballot](#) for any election; you need not show that you are out of state or ill. To send you the ballot, your county clerk's office must receive your absentee ballot application no later than October 30, seven days before the election.

Remembering Barry Commoner

Last weekend, Barry Commoner – a biologist and political advocate who founded the Citizens Party and ran for president in 1980 – passed away. He was 95 years old.

Commoner's most enduring legacy is his work to bring the science of ecology to the center of our public debate. His studies of radioactive fallout helped demonstrate the human impact of nuclear radiation, contributing to the passage of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. And he shaped the thinking of generations of environmentalists through his "four laws of ecology:" Everything is connected to everything else; everything must go somewhere; nature knows best; there is no such thing as a free lunch.

To be sure, Commoner had his flaws as an advocate. He could be strident, combative, and dismissive even toward those who agreed with him, and his politics were clearly not to everyone's liking. Yet his passion and enthusiasm were unmistakable, and he did as much as anyone to create a public movement to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink. He exemplified the responsibility of scientists to consider the public effects of technology, and he established a model of how scientists can transform the public debate.

Sincerely,

Rush Holt
Member of Congress